



Frontispiece

1946

SKETCHES

of

GANDHI

by

TOPOLSKI

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Sixteen Rupees

INTRODUCTION

IN 1951, DURING A VISIT TO THE TOPOLSKI HOME IN LONDON, I CHANCED TO SEE A COPY OF PORTRAIT OF BERNARD SHAW, A BOOK CONTAINING REPRODUCTIONS OF SOME EXQUISITE SKETCHES. TOPOLSKI HAD BEEN TO INDIA TWICE BEFORE THEN. HE HAD MADE A NAME BY HIS REMARKABLE DRAWINGS OF MEN AND EVENTS IN INDIA AND IN COUNTRIES OF THE FAR EAST WHICH HAD BEEN PUBLISHED IN THE HINDUSTAN TIMES. "YOU HAVE SKETCHED MY FATHER QUITE OFTEN," I SAID TO HIM ON SEEING HIS SHAW COLLECTION, "WHY NOT 'PORTRAIT OF GANDHI'?" HE SPENT THE FOLLOWING DAY RUMMAGING HIS PAPERS AND STUDIO AND COLLECTED EVERY LITTLE GANDHI PIECE HE HAD. THEY WERE NOT FINISHED PRODUCTS IN THE SENSE OF DRAWINGS OR PAINTINGS WHICH EMERGE FROM A SERIES OF CONVENTIONAL SITTINGS. GANDHIJI GAVE NO SITTINGS TO TOPOLSKI. BUT THE ARTIST WAS EQUAL TO THE CHALLENGE, MORE PARTICULARLY AS HE FOUND HIMSELF FREE TO OBSERVE GANDHIJI WHENEVER AND WHEREVER HE LIKED. THE RESULT WAS A NUMBER OF QUICK, ROUGH SKETCHES WHICH BY A FEW VIVID STROKES OF THE PEN CAPTURED THE DYNAMIC PERSONALITY IN A WAY THAT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN BETTERED HAD THE ARTIST RECEIVED THE CONSCIOUS CO-OPERATION OF HIS SUBJECT.

IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO SPONSOR THE PUBLICATION OF THIS VOLUME. AND I KNOW HOW HAPPY TOPOLSKI HIMSELF IS THAT THE WORK OF PRODUCTION SHOULD HAVE BEEN ENTIRELY HANDLED IN INDIA.

ALL THE BLACK-AND-WHITE SKETCHES REPRODUCED HERE WERE DRAWN IN 1944. THE FRONTISPIECE IS A PAINTING MADE BY TOPOLSKI IN 1946. CRITICS HAVE DESCRIBED IT AS THE ARTIST'S PREMONITION OF THE ASSASSINATION THAT WAS TO COME, TWO YEARS LATER, ON JANUARY 30, 1948. THE ARTIST HIMSELF HAS NEITHER DENIED NOR CONFIRMED THE THEORY OF PREMONITION, BUT THE

PICTURE IS THERE FOR EVERYONE TO JUDGE. IT REPRESENTS A PROFOUNDLY CALM BUT LIMP FIGURE OF GANDHIJI JUST PREVENTED FROM FALLING BY THE SUPPORT OF HIS COMPANIONS. OBSERVE HIS RIGHT HAND, HALF RAISED IN DOUBT AND PAIN. BENEATH IT IS ANOTHER HAND, BELONGING TO SOMEONE IN THE CROWD, OUTSTRETCHED IN READINESS TO HELP. LATER, IN 1948, AFTER THE ASSASSINATION, TOPOLSKI PAINTED ONE OF HIS MASTERPIECES "THE EAST, 1948." IT IS A COMPOSITE PICTURE IN FOUR VERTICAL UNDEMARCATED SECTIONS REPRESENTING AFRICA, THE NEAR EAST, INDIA AND CHINA. IT IS A REMARKABLE PAINTING IN TOPOLSKI'S TYPICAL CONGLOMERATE STYLE. IN THE SECTION REPRESENTING INDIA HE VIRTUALLY REPEATS HIS 1946 PAINTING WITH SOME MINOR ADDITIONAL FEATURES AND THE HEAD BENT CONSIDERABLY FORWARD—COLOUR PLATE NUMBER 26. THE FULL PAINTING IS A LARGE 12'x9' CANVAS WHICH FILLS A WALL AT RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN, THE RESIDENCE OF THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA IN NEW DELHI. IT WAS ACQUIRED BY THE PRIME MINISTER, PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU, FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA WHEN HE VISITED LONDON IN APRIL, 1949. THE OTHER 1946 PAINTING IS IN THE POSSESSION OF MR. MAURICE COLLIS, ONE OF LONDON'S LEADING ART CRITICS.

THE INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION ENJOYED BY TOPOLSKI DERIVES FROM THE NONCHALANT AUDACITY OF HIS STYLE. HIS SKETCHES CAN AT FIRST GLANCE APPEAR FRIVOLOUS. HE REVELS IN CASUAL STROKES WHICH RESEMBLE THOSE OF A CHILD PLAYING WITH PAPER AND PENCIL. ANOTHER OF HIS MANNERISMS IS TO THROW WHAT LOOK LIKE COILS OF BARBED WIRE OVER HIS WORK. BUT THROUGH IT ALL PEEP UNMISTAKABLY THE SERENITY, VIGOUR AND RHYTHM OF THE GIFT THAT IS TOPOLSKI'S.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
NEW DELHI
October 2, 1953

DEVADAS GANDHI

*The quotations from Gandhiji on
various aspects of life reproduced in
this book are unrelated to the sketches.*

Truth and Light

Only truth quenches untruth, love quenches anger, self-suffering quenches violence. This eternal rule is a rule not for saints only but for all. Those who observe it may be few but they are the salt of the earth. It is they who keep society together, not those who sin against light and truth.

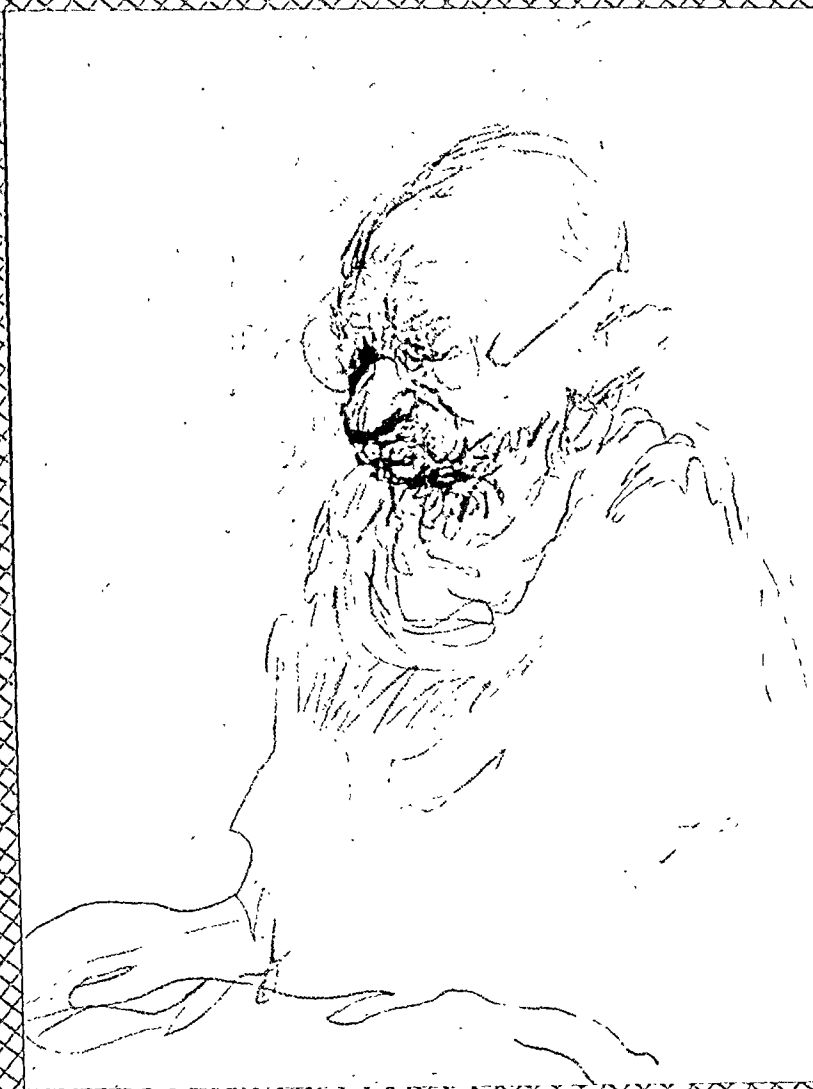
Harijan, February 1, 1942



Service

Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication but in the deliberate and voluntary restriction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment and increases the capacity for service.

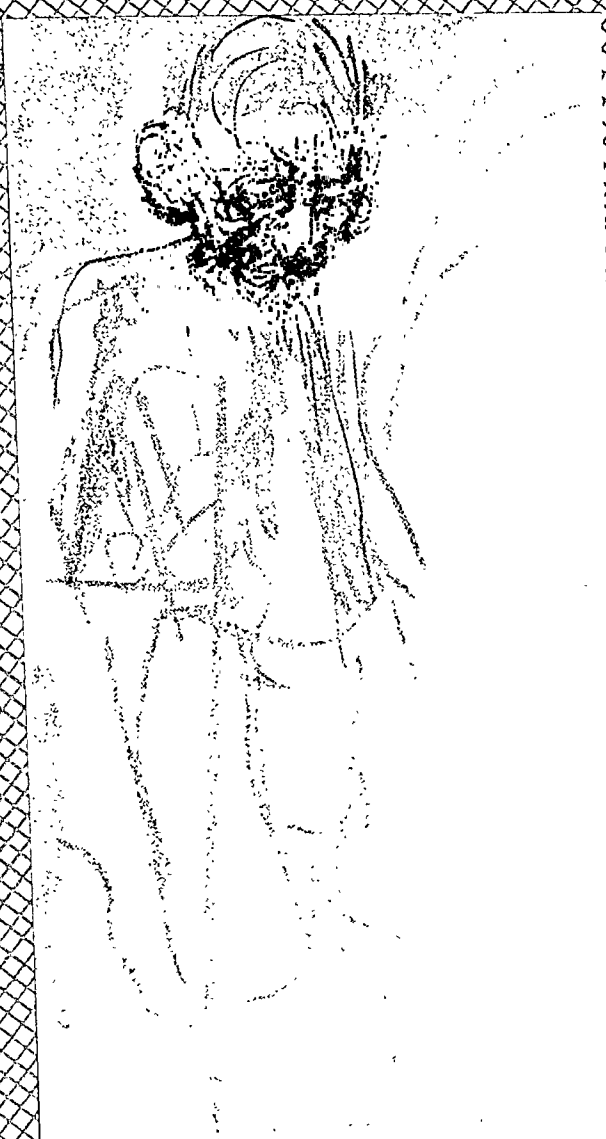
From Yerrarada Mandir, 1930



Purity

All religions agree in regarding the human body as an abode of God. Our body has been given to us on the understanding that we should render devoted service to God with its aid. It is our duty to keep it pure and unstained from within as well as from without, so as to render it back to the Giver, when the time comes for it, in the state of purity in which we got it.

A Guide to Health, 1923



Rural India

If the village perishes India will perish too. Therefore, we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they can make and can afford to use. Only, they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others.

Harijan, August 29, 1936



Present and Future

I do not want to foresee the future.
I am concerned with taking care of
the present. God has given me no
control over the moment following.

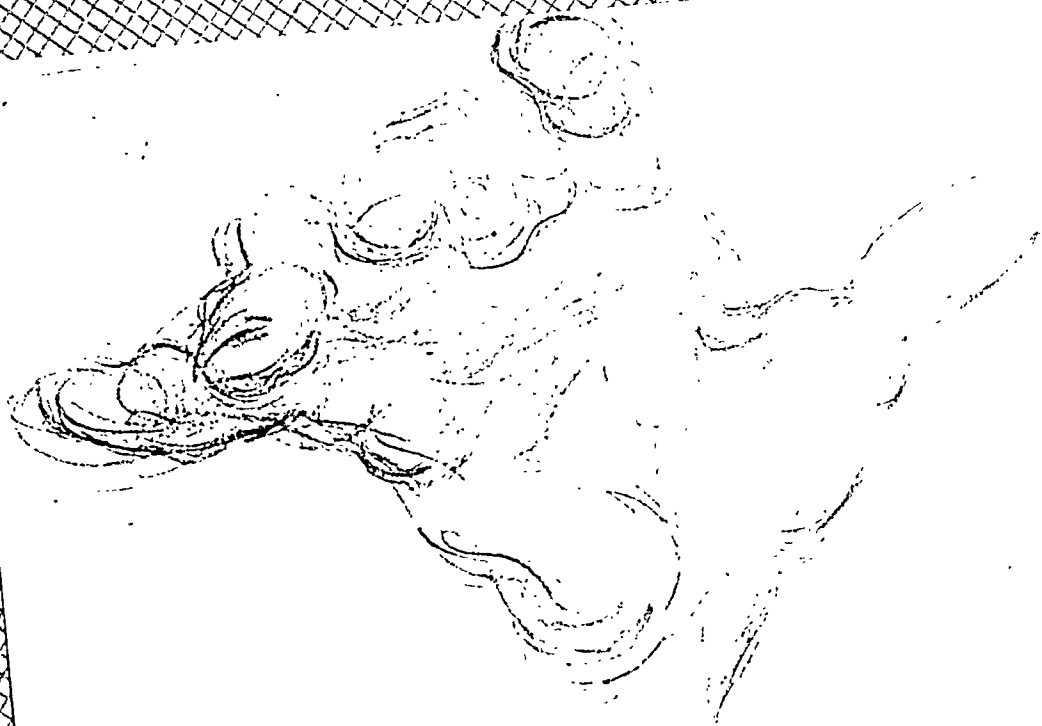
Young India, December 26, 1924



For All

It is wrong to call me an ascetic.
The ideals that regulate my life are
presented for acceptance by mankind
in general.

Harijan, October 3, 1936



Want

If we are to be non-violent, we must not wish for anything on this earth which the meanest or the lowest of human beings cannot have.

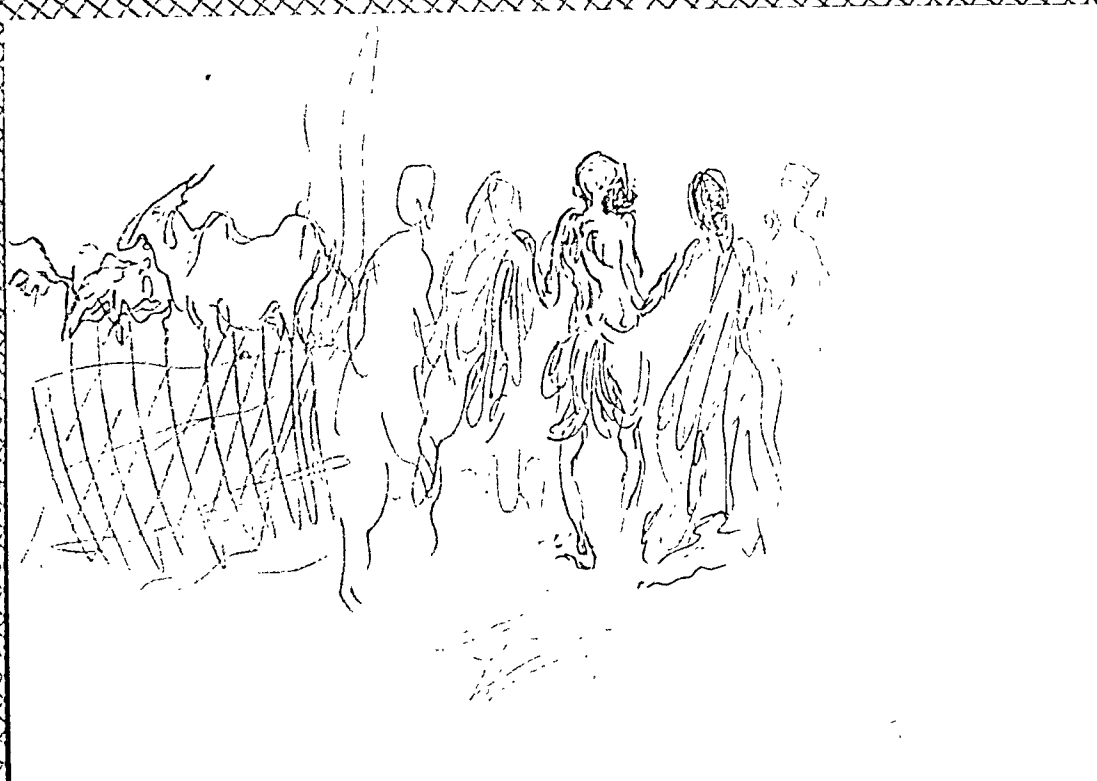
With Gandhi in Ceylon, by Mahadev Desai, 1928



Fair Deal

A labourer's skill is his capital. Just as the capitalist cannot make his capital fructify without the co-operation of labour, even so the working man cannot make his labour fructify without the co-operation of capital. And if both labour and capital have the gift of intelligence equally developed in them and have confidence in their capacity to secure a fair deal, each at the hands of the other, they would get to respect and appreciate each other as equal partners in a common enterprise. They need not regard each other as inherently irreconcilable antagonists.

Harijan, July 3, 1937



No Exclusiveness

I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.

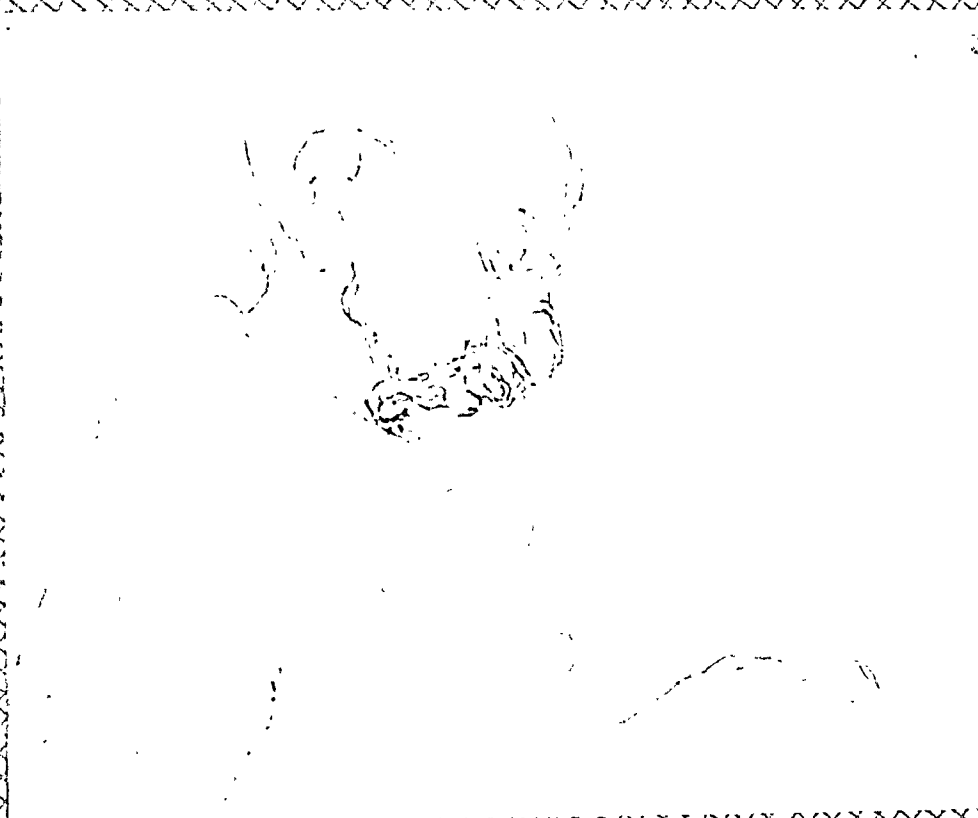
Young India, June 1, 1921



Woman

To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then indeed is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her man could not be.

Young India, April 10, 1930



Power of the State

I look upon an increase of the power of the State with the greatest fear, because, while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress.

Modern Review, 1935



Faith

I do not believe in people telling others of their faith, especially with a view to conversion. Faith does not admit of telling. It has to be lived and then it becomes self-propagating.

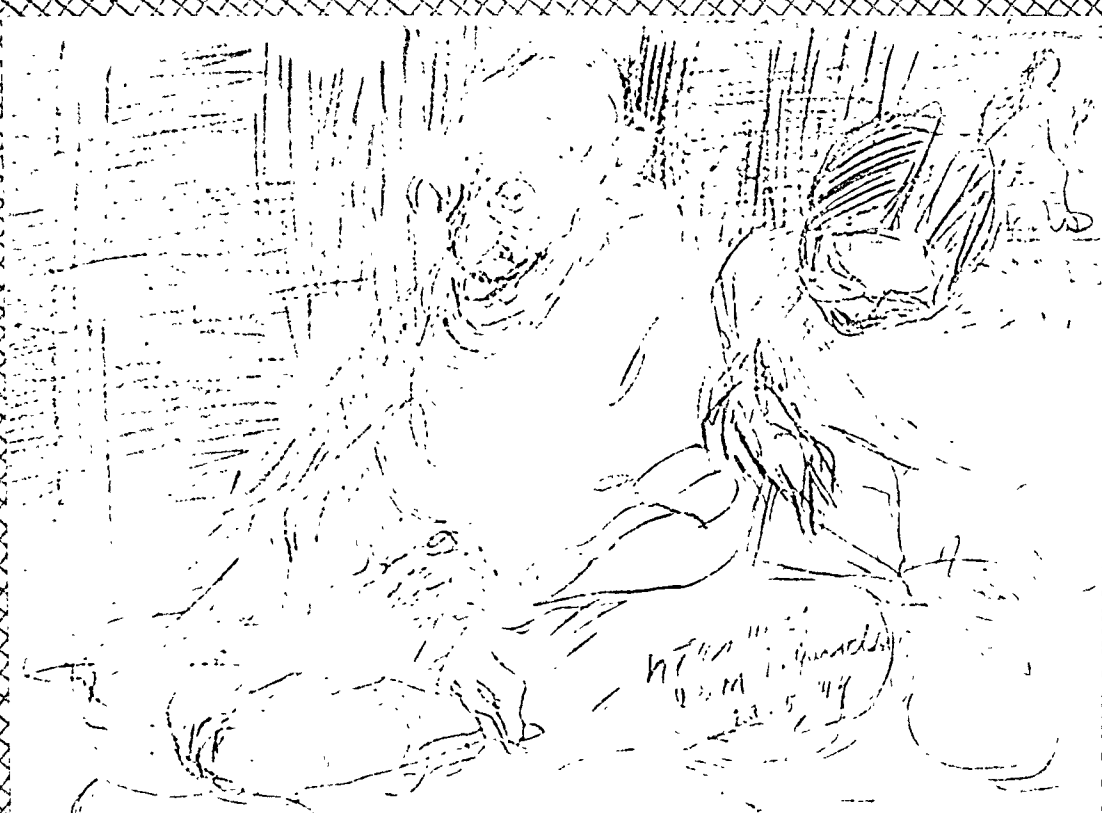
Young India, October 20, 1927



Freedom of Opinion

It is a bad habit to say that another man's thoughts are bad and ours only are good and that those holding different views from ours are the enemies of the country.

Indian Opinion, South Africa, 1908 also Indian Home Rule, 1908



The Press

One of the objects of a newspaper is to understand popular feeling and to give expression to it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; and the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects.

Indian Opinion, South Africa, 1903 also Indian Home Rule, 1908



Health

Ninetynine per cent of human beings eat more than is needed. Indeed, this is a fact of everyday experience, and does not require to be proclaimed by any doctor. There is no fear at all of men ruining their health by eating too little; the great need is for a reduction in the quantity of food that we generally take.

A Guide to Health, 1923



Drink

You will not be deceived by the specious argument that India must not be made sober by compulsion and that those who wish to drink must have facilities provided for them. The State does not cater for the vices of its people. We do not regulate or license houses of ill fame. We do not provide facilities for thieves to indulge in their propensity for thieving. I hold drink to be more damnable than thieving and perhaps even prostitution. Is it not often the parent of both?

Young India, June 8, 1921



Untouchability

If I have to be reborn, I should be born an untouchable, so that I may share the sorrows, sufferings and affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition.

Young India, May 4, 1921



Manual Labour

The utterly false idea that intelligence can be developed only through book-reading should give place to the truth that the quickest development of the mind can be achieved by artisan's work being learnt in a scientific manner.

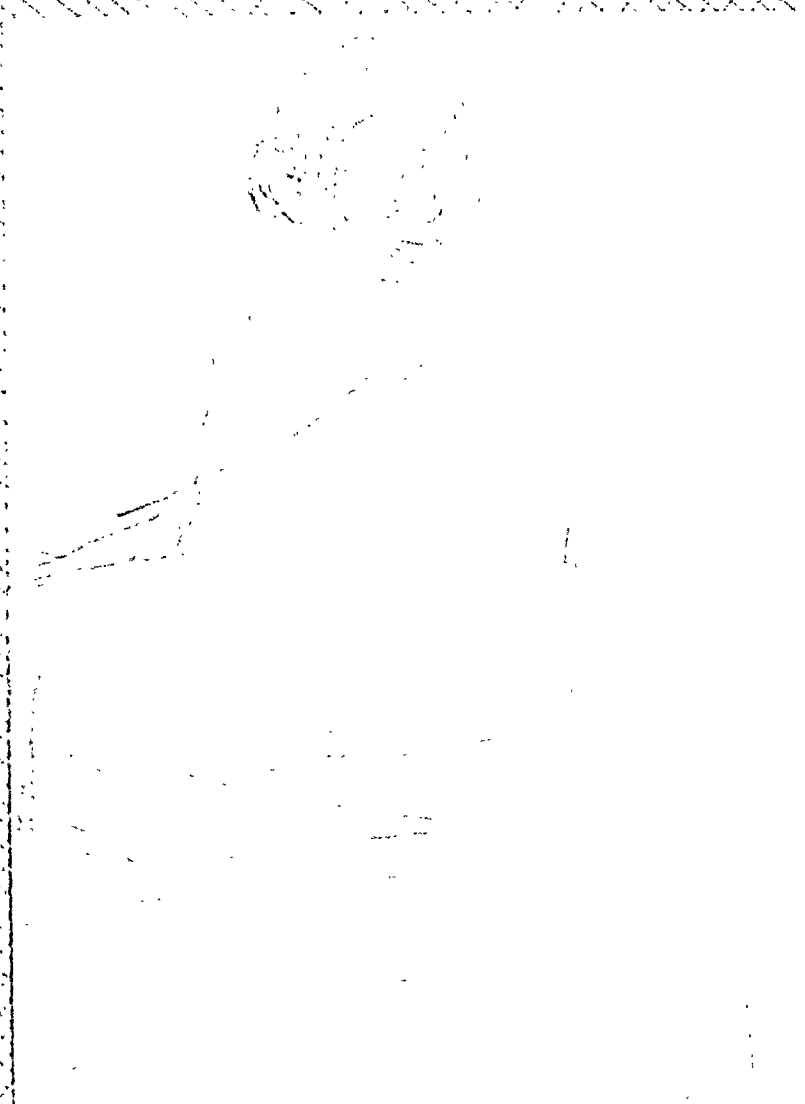
Harijan, January 9, 1937



Illness

I hold that where the rules of personal, domestic and public sanitation are strictly observed and due care is taken in the matter of diet and exercise, there should be no occasion for illness or disease. Where there is absolute purity, inner and outer, illness becomes impossible.

Harijan, May 26, 1946



Racing

I have heard it argued that horse racing is necessary for breeding good horses. There may be truth in this. Is it not possible to have horse racing without gambling, or is gambling also an aid to the breeding of good horses?

Harijan, April 9, 1937



Taskmaster

God is the hardest taskmaster I have known on earth, and He tries you through and through. And when you find that your faith or your body is failing you, and you are sinking, He comes to your assistance somehow or other and probes to you that you must not lose your faith and that He is always at your beck and call, but on His terms, not on your terms.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi,
G. A. Natesan Co., Madras



The Planner

**In a righteous struggle God Him-
self plans campaigns and conducts
battles.**

At a meeting at Sabarmati, 1928



Strength

Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.

Young India, August 11, 1920



Diet

The diet should be healthy and well-balanced. The body was never meant to be treated as a refuse bin holding the foods that the palate demands.

Key to Health, 1948



A Journey in 1904

Polak came to see me off at the station, and left with me a book to read during the journey, which, he said, I was sure to like. It was Ruskin's "Unto This Last".

The book was impossible to lay aside, once I had begun it. It gripped me. I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in it. Johannesburg to Durban was a twenty-four hours' journey. The train reached there in the evening. I could not get any sleep that night. I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book.

The teachings of "Unto This Last" I understood to be:

[Continued]



In Continuation]

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as a barber's, inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.

3. That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the life worth living.

The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realized. The third had never occurred to me. "Unto This Last" made it as clear as daylight for me that the second and the third were contained in the first. I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice.

Autobiography

